

**Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission, and Aransas Rivers and Mission,
Copano, Aransas, and San Antonio Bays Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder
Committee (BBASC) meeting**

Tuesday, October 30, 2012 at 10:00 am
Victoria Community Center
2905 E. North Street
Victoria, TX 77901

MINUTES

Members Present: Suzanne Scott, Chair; Tim Andruss (for Thurman Clements); Tyson Broad; Steve Beryeso (for Steve Clouse); Bill Braden; Jack Campbell; Doris Cooksey; James Dodson; Jennifer Ellis; Garrett Engelking; Steve Fotiades; Josh Gray (for Jay Gray); Jerry James; Chris Hale; Tommy Hill (for James Lee Murphy); Rick Illgner; Con Mims; Roland Ruiz (as replacement for Karl Dreher); Walter Womack;

Public Comment

There was no public comment at this time.

Discussion and Agreement on Agenda

The members agreed to continue with the agenda as drafted.

Approval of Minutes from August 23, 2012

The members had questions regarding transcript of discussions with Kathy Alexander, TCEQ, regarding the adopted environmental flow standards for the Guadalupe/San Antonio basin and bay system. A revised transcript will be distributed for review by the members. TCEQ will respond to any questions or comments. This portion of the minutes will be reviewed for approval at the next BBASC meeting.

Discussion and Appropriate action regarding GSA BBASC Stakeholder vacancies for Groundwater District Representatives

The BBASC members addressed the Groundwater Districts vacancy created by the resignation of Jennifer Youngblood by evaluating the following five nominees: David Mauk, Tim Andruss, Diane McMahon, Greg Sengelmann, and Milan Michalec. After voting the members, by consensus, appointed Milan Michalec to fill this vacancy.

Following up on conversations from the previous meeting, the members discussed filling the Groundwater Districts vacancy from the resignation of member Karl Dreher, Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA). By consensus the members appointed Roland Ruiz, the newly designated general manager of the EAA, to fill this position.

Discussion Regarding GSA BBASC Stakeholder informal request for GSA BBEST feedback on adopted Environmental Flow Standards and effects to the GSA BBASC Work Plan

At the August 23, 2012 BBASC meeting the members requested that a letter to the GSA BBEST be drafted requesting comments on the SB3 process and results as it stands today, especially regarding flow standards adopted by the TCEQ and their effect on the BBASC work plan. BBEST members Dr. Tim Bonner and Sam Vaughn submitted

responses which the members discussed. Bonner and Vaugh comments are attached to these minutes. Chair Scott noted that these comments and discussion were just a starting point and the BBASC will need to decide what to do with this information from this point forward.

The members requested a presentation of the State's methodology for determining freshwater inflow needs. They also requested that Dr. Bonner discuss his comments at the next meeting.

Report from GSA BBASC Adaptive Management Work Group charged with formulating feedback for the Science Advisory Committee (SAC) on the Environmental Flows Work Plan and Adaptive Management processes

At a previous meeting the BBASC learned that the SAC was putting together comments on the SB3 process for presentation to the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG). A BBASC work group was formed to draft a letter containing thoughts and comments of the GSA BBASC for consideration by the SAC in developing their comments. Work Group members included Suzanne Scott, Jennifer Ellis, Jerry James, James Lee Murphy, Steve Raabe, Dianne Wassenich, and Hope Wells. Member Con Mims suggested that this letter needs to cover the uncertainty in what happens after studies identified in the work plan are completed providing additional data for decision making. Members agreed that concerns about TCEQ's transparency in the water right permitting and flow standard development process should be included in the letter. The members discussed the draft letter and provided other comments for revision. The work group members will revise the draft letter based on member comments and discussion in order to have a final letter available for the SAC in an upcoming conference call.

Report on Texas General Land Office (GLO) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on long-term plan for Natural Resources Management (Texas Coast)

Chair Scott informed the group that, since the last BBASC meeting, the General Land Office (GLO) has held several meetings in the coastal communities to set priorities for funding that will come to the state under the RESTORE (Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies) Act. The GLO is trying to get ahead of any settlement and identify what should be funded when the money becomes available. Brian Mast, SARA, delivered a presentation developed by Norman Johns, National Wildlife Federation (NWF) on efforts to secure funding for the work plan elements of the Senate Bill 3/environmental flows process as related to the Guadalupe and Mission-Aransas Estuaries. He discussed a general history of actions that followed the Deepwater Horizon disaster and the GLO's process for establishing coastal priority projects. Technical Advisory Committees were formed to evaluate and rank Coastal Priority Projects. Projects identified came from multiple sources. The initial list did not include those identified through the SB3 process however SB3 projects that were listed in the BBASC work plan for adaptive management were added and included for consideration and ranking.

Discussion on future dates and times of GSA BBASC meetings for 2013

The BBASC members agreed to hold meetings on a quarterly, or as-needed, basis, targeting February 2013 for the next meeting.

Possible Agenda Items for the next GSA BBASC meeting

Members discussed the following items for future agendas:

- Discussion of comments submitted by BBEST member Dr. Tim Bonner
- TPWD presentation of freshwater inflow methodology
- Coastal and Marine Spatial Process (James Dodson)

Public Comment

There was no public comment at this time.

Adjourn

From: Vaughn, Sam [<mailto:Sam.Vaugh@hdrinc.com>]

Sent: Monday, October 22, 2012 12:10 AM

To: Brian Mast

Cc: Steve Raabe; Vaughn, Sam

Subject: RE: Informal Request from the GSA BBASC

Brian:

Pursuant Chair Scott's request on behalf of the GSA BBASC communicated by letter and messages below, I offer the following perspectives on the adopted environmental flow standards and any potential changes to the Work Plan that should be considered in response to the standards:

1) I do not perceive that the adopted instream flow standards for the Guadalupe and San Antonio River Basins necessitate any changes in the ranking or content of Tier 1 instream flow studies identified and described by the GSA BBASC and BBEST in the adopted Work Plan.

2) TCEQ has adopted freshwater inflow standards for the San Antonio Bay System that appear to limit economically feasible development of surface water supplies requiring a new appropriation in the Guadalupe – San Antonio River Basin to two planned run-of-river diversion projects with off-channel storage. The 2011 South Central Texas Regional Water Plan indicates that the firm yield of these two projects totals less than 37,000 acft/yr as compared to projected Region L needs for additional water supplies of almost 437,000 acft/yr by 2060. The Guadalupe Estuary is by far the least impacted major estuary on the Texas coast in terms of the ratio of freshwater inflow to upstream reservoir storage. Yet, the GSA BBASC was unable to quantitatively evaluate the effects of planned water supply projects on the abundance of species of value to commercial and recreational fisheries with the very limited exception of an assessment of potential changes in long-term average oyster harvest using one element of the State Methodology that pre-dates SB3.

3) In light of Item 2, it is very important that Work Plan studies be undertaken that will facilitate quantitative assessment of the effects of changes in freshwater inflow on the abundance of species of commercial and recreational importance. The Tier 1, Priority #3 study regarding Rangia Clam Investigations does not meet this objective. I would suggest replacing the Rangia Clam investigations in Tier 1 with the Tier 2 study identified as Habitat Suitability Models for Eastern Oysters, Blue Crabs, & White Shrimp. The latter study focuses on species of commercial value which have been scientifically sampled by TPWD for decades, while Rangia clams have not. Anecdotally, I have been told that very few live Rangia clams were found in the upper reaches of the Guadalupe estuary early this year. If this is, in fact, the case, then the Rangia Clam Investigations envisioned may be impossible anyway.

4) The scope for Habitat Suitability Models for Eastern Oysters, Blue Crabs, & White Shrimp should be modified to include development of tools and relationships for explicit, quantitative consideration of effects of changes in freshwater inflow on species abundance. Such tools and relationships can be calibrated to available TPWD sampling data supplemented by National Marine Fisheries harvest data.

5) Serious consideration should also be given to studies facilitating refinement of existing or development of new quantitative relationships between freshwater inflow and finfish species of commercial and recreational value (e.g., spotted seatrout, red drum, etc.). Like oysters, blue crabs, and shrimp, scientifically sampled data are available from TPWD and other sources. Such finfish species, however, are not mentioned in the adopted Work Plan. Perhaps the scope of the Tier 1 Priority #4 study described as Life Cycle Habitat & Salinity Studies for Key Faunal Species could be modified to specifically include appropriate finfish species.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer my perspectives and suggestions. Should you and/or members of the GSA BBASC need additional information, please contact me at your convenience.

Thanks,

Sam

SAMUEL K. VAUGHN

TEXAS PE#63487

HDR Engineering, Inc.

Vice President / Professional Associate

From: Bonner, Timothy H
Sent: Wednesday, September 19, 2012 10:50 AM
To: 'bmast@sara-tx.org'; 'sraabe@sara-tx.org'
Cc: 'Sam.Vaugh@hdrinc.com'
Subject: FW: Informal Request from the GSA BBASC
All:

According to the legislative mandate, the work plan must:

1. establish a review (BBASC recommends a shorter time frame)
2. prescribe monitoring, studies, and activities (for what purpose?)
3. For the purpose of validating and refining...recommendations.

Out of the 19 or so studies listed in the work plan, the term “validation” or “validate” is used only 5 times. When used, it is unclear how validation will be used to inform/refine recommendations. More effort was spent (based on word count) in the work plan justifying “need of shorter review time” than discussing the essential component of the mandate—work plan for the validation of e-flow recommendations.

Therefore my question is: what are the explicit steps of validation among any of the listed studies? At one level, all of the suggested studies of the work plan will be useful and will inform e-flow recommendations. But, how do they validate the recommendations? Something is amiss, if one cannot clearly delineate the steps to validation.

This is not a trivial issue but one easy to ignore. However, there is a nuance that is elusive (and has been elusive to me for a long time until recently). Specifically, the work plan is not using the scientific method. Not a big surprise, since Instream Flow work is generally void of the scientific method. In fact, a conglomerate of agency/university folks are being assembled now to discuss and apply scientific method (hypothesis generation) to instream flow investigations.

Listed studies in the work plan can be used effectively to validate the recommendations, but it will take some modification. Now that the standards are set, the work plan needs this modification to be efficient and fiduciary with available funds. Otherwise, a lot of work will be done that minimally, if at all, informs the standards. The first step is the biggest step...recognize that there is a problem. Next step: easy modification by giving context to questions, which I would be happy to participate with but only if Step 1 is taken.

Tim

Timothy H. Bonner
Texas State University
Department of Biology/Aquatic Station
601 University Drive
San Marcos, Texas 78666-4684
phone: 512.245.2284
fax: 512.245.7919
email: TBonner@txstate.edu
website: <http://www.bio.txstate.edu/~tbonner/bonner.htm>
office: Freeman Aquatic Biology (FAB) Building, Room 210B